NATION

SC firm on forest restoration in T'gana

≫ Page: 5 ≪

BUSINESS

Sensex jumps 1,200 pts, Nifty reclaims 25K peak

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Bologna end 51-year wait for glory with Italian Cup triumph

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Kalyana K'taka cries for govt relief as sun batters regions

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BIDAR/KALABURAGI, 15 MAY

Kalyana Karnataka region is in the grip of a severe and unprecedented heatwave, prompting citizens, activists and lawmakers to urge the State government to declare the region a "state-specific disaster" zone. In April, the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) reported alarming temperatures: Bidar peaked at 45°C, the highest in the State. The highest temperature recorded in Bidar's was 44°C in 1931. Yadgir was the second hottest in the State at 44.6°C, followed by Kalaburagi at 44°C and Raichur at 43°C. Over three weeks, Kalyana Karnataka residents have endured a daily average of 44°C, with no respite in sight. Karnataka's neighbour Telangana, which is also facing as hot as a furnace, has already declared several districts as "state-specific disaster" zones. *—Salar News*

More on Page 3

HC stops coercive action against Sonu Nigam

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

The Karnataka High Court has directed that no coercive action be taken against singer Sonu Nigam until the next hearing regarding the criminal case about allegedly offensive remarks made during a concert. The case arose from a complaint following an incident at a concert where some Kannadiga fans requested Nigam to perform in Kannada. The singer allegedly took offence to the tone of the request and reportedly remarked, "This is why Pahalgam happened". It stayed the filing of any final report in the case until the next date of hearing. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Not party's opinion: Cong's 'Lakshman Rekha' to Tharoor

'NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Congress has reportedly pulled up senior party leader Shashi Tharoor, Thiruvananthapuram MP for crossing the "Lakshman Rekha" by deviating from party line on Operation Sindoor and subsequent ceasefire announcement saying that it is not the time to air individual views but to amplify the party's official stand Thiruvananthapuram MP had come out in praise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that he has handled it "extremely well" and criticised the US President Donald Trump for claiming he 'brokered' a ceasefire between India and Pakistan with his critics saying he has become an effective spokesperson of the government. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Ops continue after 10 militants killed in Manipur

IMPHAL, 15 MAY

Operations were underway on Thursday morning after Assam Rifles gunned down 10 militants in an encounter in Manipur's Chandel district, officials said. The site of the encounter is close to the India-Myanmar international border in the hilly terrain of Chandel district, an official said, adding it is 130 km from the state capital Imphal and has scant human inhabitation. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 5

Can SC fix timeline for Prez: Murmu over bills row

In a rare move, Murmu poses 14 questions to the apex court

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

In a rare move, President Droupadi Murmu has invoked Article 143(1) of the Constitution to seek the Supreme Court's opinion on whether a judicially-imposed timeline can be set for the President or Governors to act on bills passed by state legislatures.

This follows the Supreme Court's 8 April verdict in a case involving the Tamil Nadu government, where the court for the first time directed that the President must decide on bills referred by a Governor within three months. The verdict also held that Governors must act strictly on the advice of the Council of Ministers under Article 200 and cannot delay action on bills.

In her five-page reference, dated 13 May, President Murmu posed 14 legal questions to the court. She questioned the validity of setting fixed timelines for constitutional authorities, citing that Articles 200 and 201—which outline the options available to Governors and the President regarding state legislation—do not specify any time limits.

The President also raised concerns about the Supreme Court's use of Article 142 *PHOTO: PTI*

The President also raised concerns about the Supreme Court's use of Article 142, which was invoked in the Tamil Nadu case to deem a re-presented bill as passed.

> **I strongly condemn the Union Government's Presidential reference, which attempts to subvert the Constitutional position already settled by the Supreme Court in the Tamil Nadu Governor's case and other precedents**
>
> -MK Stalin, TN CM

She stated that the idea of "deemed assent" is alien to the constitutional scheme and limits the discretionary powers of the President and Governors.

Instead of seeking a review of the verdict—which would have been heard in chambers by the same bench—the Centre has opted for a Presidential reference, which must be examined by a five-judge Constitution Bench.

The reference challenges key elements of the April verdict, which ruled that: Governors have no discretion to delay or reject bills passed by state assemblies; Personal dissatisfaction, political considerations, or other irrelevant grounds cannot justify reserving a bill for the President; The state can approach the Supreme Court if the President withholds assent. President Murmu emphasised the need for clarity on the constitutional boundaries of Article 142 when it intersects with powers defined in Articles 200 and 201. The Supreme Court may choose to answer all, some, or none of the questions raised in the reference. *—PTI*

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meets troops during a visit to the Badami Bagh Cantt, in Srinagar *PHOTO: PTI*

Are nukes safe with Pak: Rajnath seeks review

SRINAGAR, 15 MAY

Pakistan's nuclear weapons should be brought under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as they are not safe in such a rogue nation, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

Singh's comments came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India would not tolerate "nuclear blackmail" by Pakistan.

During his first trip to Jammu and Kashmir since Operation Sindoor, Singh said India's resolve against terrorism is evident in its not paying heed to Pakistan's nuclear blackmail.

Meanwhile, IAEA has said no radiation leak or release from any nuclear facility in Pakistan occurred during its stand-off with India.

The statement came amid claims on social media that Pakistan's nuclear facilities were hit by Indian armed forces. Pakistan condemned Singh's remarks calling it a reflection of "sheer ignorance of IAEA's mandate and responsibilities.

Aviation watchdog BCAS revoked the security clearance of ground handling company Celebi Airport Services India, a unit of Turkey's Celebi, with immediate effect in the "interest of national security". India and Pak also agreed to extend the ceasefire. *—PTI*

SC FLAYS MP MINISTER FOR REMARKS ON COL

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court said on Thursday reprimanded Madhya Pradesh minister Vijay Shah, who is facing an FIR for his remarks targeting Col Sofiya Qureshi.

"What sort of statements are you making? You are a responsible minister of the government," Chief Justice BR Gavai told Shah's counsel.

The bench, also comprising Justice Augustine George Masih, said the apex court would on Friday hear Shah's plea challenging the MP High Court's 14 May order directing an FIR against him for the comments.

"When this country is undergoing such a situation, every sentence or word uttered by a responsible minister has to be with a sense of responsibility," the CJI said. "Persons holding such a constitutional office are expected to exercise a degree of restraint."Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh High Court slammed the police over the FIR registered Vijay, terming it "gross subterfuge" on the state's part. *—PTI*

Zelenskyy arrives for peace talks; Putin absent

STANBUL, 15 MAY

A low-ranking Russian delegation arrived in Istanbul for peace talks with Ukraine while a Ukrainian delegation led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and including other senior government figures landed in the Turkish capital Ankara.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was not part of the Moscow delegation, according to a list released by the Kremlin Wednesday night, prompting criticism from Western officials that the Kremlin isn't serious about peace.

Details about whether, when and where the Ukrainian delegation might meet their Russian counterparts are still unclear but is expected to be clarified after Zelenskyy and Erdogan meet.

Zelenskyy will sit at the table only with Putin, Ukraine's Presidential Adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

KHELO INDIA ENDS

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Khadse present the overall championship trophy to Maharashtra team during the closing ceremony of the Khelo India Youth Games 2025 in Patna, Bihar, on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

WOMAN RAPED ON WAY TO OFFICE AT NIGHT NEAR PUNE, 1 HELD

PUNE, 15 MAY

A 27-year-old woman on her way to work for a night shift in the Chakan area of Pune district has been allegedly raped and assaulted by a man.

The accused, identified as Prakash Bhangre, was arrested.

The alleged incident took place around 11.45 pm on 13 May when the victim woman was on her way to a bus pick-up point in Medankarwadi. Bhangre allegedly intercepted her, dragged her behind a commercial complex and raped her.

Her cries alerted two passersby, prompting Bhangre to flee the spot.

He was arrested with the help of technical analysis and local intelligence. *—PTI*

3 terrorists killed in Pulwama

SRINAGAR, 15 MAY

Three unidentified terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the Nader Tral area of Awantipora in the district after receiving specific inputs about the presence of terrorists there.

The search operation turned into an encounter after the terrorists opened fire at the forces, which retaliated. The three terrorists were killed in the exchange of fire. *—PTI*

A drone camera captures three JeM terrorists in their hideout before they are neutralised in Pulwama *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Techie dies after bike skids during B'luru rain

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

A 25-year-old employee from a private firm has tragically died following a motorcycle accident during heavy rain on the Outer Ring Road near Mariyappanapalya on Wednesday night.

The deceased, identified as Keerthi, was riding a KTM Duke at high speed and reportedly in a reckless manner when the incident occurred around 9.15pm within the jurisdiction of the Jnanabharati traffic police.

According to police reports, Keerthi was travelling from Ullal Junction to Mariyappanapalya Junction during a downpour when he lost control of his bike near PVP School, resulting in a severe head injury after skidding and falling onto the road.

Passers-by quickly came to his aid and transported the unconscious rider to the nearby Aryan Hospital. Sadly, doctors pronounced him dead upon arrival, having succumbed to his injuries.

Authorities have registered a case under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106(1) (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, treating the incident as a self-accident. Further legal proceedings are currently underway. *—Salar News*

TIM COOK TOLD TO AVOID INDIA

India may drop all tariffs on US goods: Trump

DOHA, 15 MAY

US President Donald Trump on Thursday claimed that India has offered to drop all tariffs on American goods.

Speaking in Doha, Trump said he had a "little problem" with Tim Cook and told the Apple CEO not to build iPhones in India.

Trump, who is in Qatar as part of his four-day visit to the Gulf region referred to Apple's plans to make iPhones in India.

"They [India] have offered us a deal agreeing to charge us literally no tariffs.... We are not interested in you building in India....," he said.

There has been no such announcement from India.

- Trump had announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on several countries, including India and China. However, he later announced a 90-day suspension of these tariffs until 9 July.

Trump's comments came after Cook had said his company made quarterly records in several countries, including India.

Apple will source majority of the iPhones sold in the US from India in the June quarter, while China will produce the vast majority of the devices for other markets amid uncertainty over tax tariffs.

According to an analysis by S&P Global, Apple's iPhone sales in the US were 75.9 million units in 2024, with exports in March from India equivalent to 3.1 million units.

The US president earlier had said that negotiations with India over a bilateral trade deal were "coming along great" and he thought they will have a deal with India.

Trump had announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on several countries, including India and China. However, he later announced a 90-day suspension of these tariffs until 9 July. *—PTI*

State HC judge recommended for Manipur HC CJ post

BALASORE, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court collegium on Thursday recommended the appointment of Karnataka High Court judge Kempaiah Somashekar as Manipur High Court's chief justice. A three-member collegium headed by Chief Justice of India, BR Gavai in its meeting recommended the appointment in view of retirement of incumbent chief justice D Krishnakumar on 21 May. "The Supreme Court Collegium ..... has recommended appointment of Justice Kempaiah Somashekar, Judge, High Court of Karnataka, as the Chief Justice of High Court of Manipur...." the resolution said. Justice Somashekar served in several key judicial positions. He was appointed as an additional judge of the Karnataka High Court in 2016, becoming a permanent judge in 2018. *—PTI*

HOPCOMs launches mobile market scheme

BENGALURU 15 MAY

In a new initiative aimed at providing better market access to farmers while generating employment, HOPCOMs launched a mobile fruit and vegetable sales scheme in apartment complexes across the city. This public-private partnership model invites unemployed youth to partner with Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society (HOPCOMs) to sell fresh produce directly to apartment residents at fixed prices. According to HOPCOMs Managing Director Mirji Umesh Shankar, participants can earn between Rs 50,000 and Rs 60,000 per month. HOPCOMs will supply the produce and identify apartment complexes for the mobile sales. Interested individuals will be required to make a refundable deposit, and a 10 per cent incentive will be given on monthly sales performance. This marks the first time HOPCOMs is venturing into a mobile retail model with private participation *—Salar News*

Police escort skids off road near BR Hills

MYSURU, 14 MAY

A police escort vehicle skidded off a rain-soaked road and overturned near BR Hills in Yelandur taluk on Wednesday evening, seriously injuring Yelandur PSI Akash and driver Prathap. The incident occurred as the convoy of district minister K Venkatesh was returning from a visit to the Sericulture Research and Extension Centre. The minister, who also oversees Sericulture and Animal Husbandry, had been reviewing activities at the centre. Both injured personnel were rushed to a private hospital in Mysuru for treatment. The minister was not in the affected vehicle and was unharmed. Heavy rainfall in the region is believed to have caused the vehicle to skid *—Salar News*

Occupancy certificate must for electric, water connection

CM says number of GBGB municipal corps not finalised

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Following a Supreme Court directive, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has made it mandatory for property owners to obtain an Occupancy Certificate (OC) or Completion Certificate (CC) before receiving electricity and water connections within City limits. The move comes Greater Bengaluru Governance Act sprung into effect on Thursday.

The Supreme Court, in its 17 December 2024 order, ruled that basic utilities such as power, water and sanitation must only be provided to buildings certified for occupancy by the local authority. Responding to this, BBMP has identified around 66,400 pending applications seeking electricity connections from BESCOM.

In accordance with the order, BBMP will now contact applicants through SMS and phone calls to verify if their properties have valid building plan approvals, Khata ('A' or 'B'), and whether they have applied for an OC or CC. BBMP Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao stressed that the rule applies uniformly to all properties, including those with 'B' Khata plots.

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) **PHOTO: PTI**

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said a decision on the number of municipal corporations for the City will be taken after further discussion.

When Siddaramaiah checked with his Additional Chief Secretary LK Atheeq whether three corporations were being formed, the latter responded, "it is yet to be decided, until then BBMP will continue."

As the Chief Minister, he will be the Chairman of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), he noted.

"After holding meetings, we will take a decision as to how many corporations should be formed," he said.

> **Since Chief Ministers are not elected from municipal corporations, how can Siddaramaiah be made Chairman of the Greater Bengaluru Authority?**
>
>
>
> -NR Ashoka, Leader of Opposition in State Legislative Assembly

The State government on Wednesday notified that the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, will come into effect from 15 May. However, all functionaries will continue to have the same powers and duties as conferred under the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Act, 2020, until the new law comes into effect fully.

The Act provides 120 days to establish the GBA. *—Salar news with agencies*

REMEMBERS LAST YEAR

Lack of funds should not force us to protest in Delhi: HM

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Alleging a delay by the Union government in releasing funds for the centrally-sponsored schemes and grants to the State, Home Minister G Parameshwara on Thursday said that a situation should not come for the state government to once again hold a protest for this in New Delhi.

He said that the timely release of central funds would help in taking up development works.

"For the last two years, we have been asking the Centre to give the grants that are supposed to come to the State. For various reasons, it is getting delayed. Sometimes they don't come at all," Parameshwara said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had requested the Members of Parliament from the State to put pressure on the Centre.

"It is said that about Rs 5,500 crore should be released to the State immediately. We should demand under the Centre and State relationship that is there. Last time a situation had come for the State government to go and protest in Delhi as repeated attempts to get funds failed. Such a situation should not come again," he said.

Siddaramaiah had led a protest in New Delhi in February last year against the Centre's "injustice" to the State in devolution of taxes.

Responding to a question about a number of MPs skipping Wednesday's meeting, Parameshwara said, "They have work to perform and hence wouldn't have attended the meeting." *—PTI*

Yellow Line 'likely' to run from June: BMRCL MD

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Pending regulatory approvals, the long-awaited Namma Metro's Yellow Line is likely to be operational from June, for limited stops, said Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) Managing Director Maheshwar Rao M on Thursday.

"We are trying our best to get it running by June," Rao said.

According to him, the worst-case scenario is that it may be delayed by a month, thereby starting in July.

Earlier Rao had said the Yellow Line would start by mid-May.

The Yellow Line, which will be running from RV Road to Bommasandra, has been repeatedly postponed. The delay in the arrival of the driverless train sets is said to be one of the main reasons for repeated postponement.

The first 'Made in India' driverless train sets arrived in the first week of January from Titagarh factory in Uttarpara, West Bengal. On 13 May, a third train set arrived at Hebbagodi depot near Electronics City. Two additional train sets are expected to be delivered by the end of July, or early August. *—PTI*

POST OPERATION

Congress leader Sowmya Reddy with other workers protest against Madhya Pradesh Minister Vijay Shah for his remarks on Colonel Sofiya Qureshi, at Congress Bhavan in City; Tiranga Rally, organised by the BJP, for the Army at Malleshwaram in Bengaluru, on Thursday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

No clear stance on war: Ashoka flays Congress

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

Opposition Leader R Ashoka demanded that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) clearly announce its position on whether it supports war or peace, as some Congress leaders advocate for war while others call for peace.

Speaking at a press conference, Ashoka criticised the Congress, recalling that during its rule, it had begged for aid from the US. He pointed out that during the Mumbai terror attack, which killed 175 people, the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government failed to respond. In contrast, Prime Minister Modi has given a fitting reply, he said.

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar has already ruled out any mediation, yet Congress leaders are "searching for stones in curd," Ashoka said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge welcomed a ceasefire, but others in Congress insisted on continuing the war. Ashoka said this indicates factions within the party.

He urged the AICC to clearly state its stance on whether it wants war, peace, or negotiations before discussing other issues.

Meanwhile, Labour Minister Santosh Lad lashed out at Modi, demanding a "clear reason" for reaching the understanding of a "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan.

"We don't accept your (Modi's) speech, just tell us clearly, what was the reason for the ceasefire? Where are those who attacked in Pahalgam? PM must speak about it," Lad told reporters here. *—Salar News with agencies*

'Pahalgam was stage managed'

KOLAR, 15 MAY

Kolar Congress MLA Kottur Manjunath on Thursday remarked that the Pahalgam terror was "stage managed" as no security personnel was present at the site. Manjunath questioned how the assailants managed to flee unnoticed by security personnel after killing 26 people. He flayed the government for not disclosing who the terrorists were. He noted the government also did not furnish details of the terrorists killed, making it hard to believe that the government had actually neutralised 100 terrorists. The government hadn't even revealed the identities of the deceased "The terrorists should have handed over to the widows of the victims," he remarked. *—Salar News*

FIR against fake post claiming Col Qureshi's house attacked

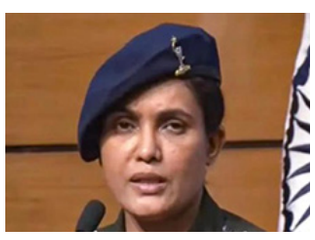
BELAGAVI, 15 MAY

A police case has been registered regarding a fraudulent post on social media alleging an attack on the in-laws of Army officer Sofiya Qureshi. The complaint was filed by a police officer, leading to a case against Anis Uddin, an X account holder. He is charged under sections 353(2) (public mischief) and 192(A) (provocation with intent to cause a riot) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Two additional account holders, Khubaani and Drrumi, have also been implicated in the FIR for retweeting the misleading post, with their identities yet to be established. Superintendent of Police Bheemashankar Guled confirmed that "no such incident has taken place," labelling the post as false.

Initial investigations suggest that Uddin resides in British Columbia, Canada. Home Minister G Parameshwara asserted that the post is an "insult to the state and the country."

Police security was provided at the house of Indian Army Colonel Sofia Qureshi's father-in-law at Konnur **PHOTO: X**



As a precautionary measure, police have visited Colonel Qureshi's in-laws' residence, where two officers have been stationed for security. *—PTI*

Lokayukta raids 7 govt officials in assets case

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

The Lokayukta sleuths on Thursday conducted raids at multiple locations connected to seven government officials in disproportionate assets cases against them.

The coordinated raids were carried out at 40 locations linked to the accused officers.

According to the Lokayukta officials, those raided are Rajashekar, Project Director, Nirmiti Kendra in Tumakuru; Manjunath, Survey Supervisor in Dakshina Kannada district; Renuka Satarle, Dr BR Ambedkar Abhivrudhi Nigama in Vijayapura; Murali TV, Additional Director, Directorate of Urban and Rural Planning, Bengaluru Urban; HR Nataraj, Inspector, Legal Meterology, Bengaluru City; Anant Kumar, Second Divsuon Assistant, Hoskote Taluk Office, Bengaluru Rural district; and Umakanth, Shahpur Taluk Office, Yadgiri.

Lokayukta sources said many incriminating documents related to immovable properties and unaccounted cash, ornaments, high-end vehicles and cash were seized. *—PTI*

'IF HE COMPLIES'

HC says no coercive action against Sonu Nigam

BENGALURU, 15 MAY

The Karnataka High Court has directed that no coercive action be taken against singer Sonu Nigam until the next hearing regarding a recent criminal case linked to allegedly offensive remarks made during a concert. The court also permitted him to testify via video conferencing if required by the investigating officer (IO). Should a physical appearance be insisted upon, the officer may visit him, with Nigam to cover the related expenses.

The case arose from a complaint following an incident at a concert where some Kannadiga fans requested Nigam to perform in Kannada. The singer allegedly took offence to the tone of the request and reportedly remarked, "This is why Pahalgam happened".

During the hearing, Nigam's lawyer, Dhananjay Vidyapati, argued that the complaint was motivated by a desire for publicity and that the supposed offence of public mischief was unjustified. In contrast, the State counsel maintained that Nigam's intent behind the comments needed thorough examination.

"Whether the comments were intentional or not cannot be adjudicated under Section 482 (CrPC). He has not cooperated with the investigation. He could have at least said he was busy," the State submitted.

The court acknowledged the State's stance, emphasising that should Nigam comply with the investigation and that no coercive action would be taken. The filing of a final report has been stayed until the next hearing date. *—PTI*

Naked thief breaks into shop, steals 85 phones

BENGALURU 15 MAY

In a bizarre case of burglary, a masked thief broke into a mobile phone shop in Bommanahalli – not just through the wall, but without wearing any clothes.

The theft occurred around 1.30am on 9 May at Hanuman Telecom, a shop owned by a local resident, Dinesh, near Hongasandra. According to the complaint filed with the police, the burglar drilled through the rear wall of the shop and made away with 85 mobile phones, worth nearly Rs 25 lakh.

CCTV footage captured the thief entering the shop nude, wearing only a mask and carrying a torch. Sources in the police department suspect that the man deliberately avoided wearing clothes to prevent identification. "In several cases, clothing patterns and brands have helped us trace suspects. This could be an attempt to outsmart our usual methods," said a police officer.

Shop owner Dinesh, who has run the outlet for several years, discovered the break-in the next morning and filed a police complaint. The footage has been handed over for forensic analysis.

While police have registered a case and initiated an investigation, the suspect remains at large. *—Salar News*

KALYANA K'TAKA CRIES FOR GOVT RELIEF AS SUN BATTERS REGIONS

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BIDAR/KALABURAGI, 15 MAY

Kalyana Karnataka region is in the grip of a severe and unprecedented heatwave, prompting citizens, activists and lawmakers to urge the State government to declare the region a "state-specific disaster" zone.

In April, the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) reported alarming temperatures: Bidar peaked at 45ºC, the highest in the State. The highest temperature recorded in Bidar's was 44ºC in 1931. Yadgir was the second hottest in the State at 44.6ºC, followed by Kalaburagi at 44ºC and Raichur at 43ºC. Over three weeks, Kalyana Karnataka residents have endured a daily average of 44ºC, with no respite in sight. Karnataka's neighbour Telangana, which is also facing as hot as a furnace, has already declared several districts as "state-specific disaster" zones. Telangana has announced Rs 4 lakh in compensation to families of those who die due to heatstroke. Now, locals in Kalyana Karnataka are demanding that the Karnataka Congress government follows suit.

Salar News attempted to contact the District In-Charge Minister and Minister for Forest, Zoology and Environment Eshwar B. Khandre ,Rahim Khan Minister For Muncipal Administration and HAJJ Government of Karnataka, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister and Kalaburagi In-charge Priyank Kharge,and Dr. Ajay Singh, Chairman of the Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB), regarding the 'state disaster' declaration for heat waves, but our calls went unanswered.

Salar News contacted District In-Charge Minister and Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre, Minister for Municipal Administration and Hajj Rahim Khan, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge and Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board Chairman Ajay Singh to seek their response on declaring the heatwave a state-specific disaster. However, none responded to calls or messages.

Telangana gives Rs 4L aid for families of heatwave victims

Health, livelihoods in crisis

The intense heat has devastated daily life, triggering health emergencies, water shortages, and agricultural decline. Vulnerable communities — particularly daily wage workers, farmers, labourers, and sheep herders — are at the mercy of the relentless sun. Savitri, who heads a women welfare cooperative society in Bidar, told Salar News, "Daily wage workers and herders can't afford to stay indoors. They risk heatstroke just to survive. The government must provide Rs 4 lakh compensation to families of victims, just as Telangana."

The Joint Secretary of Bidar's Janavadi Mahila Sangathan District Co-operative Society in Bidar added that those "sitting in air-conditioned rooms must not ignore those toiling in this oven-like heat". Despite the heat, water and first aid are not easily accessible to labourers. The villagers from Bhudera fume over the lack of basic amenities under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, including water, shade, and first aid. Daily wage worker Aleema blamed the Public Development Officers for it. However, Kalaburagi Deputy Commissioner Fauzia Taranum told Salar News, "Officials have been instructed to ensure that all necessary facilities, including shade, water, and medical aid, are made available to those in need.

Deforestation to be blamed

Vinay Kumar Malge, State Wildlife Board member, explained that the proximity to heat-prone regions such as Telangana and Maharashtra, combined with high-pressure systems, makes it hotter. "Extended dry spells reduce soil moisture and vegetation cover, turning land into a heat-absorbing surface," he said.

"Declaring Bidar a state-specific disaster zone is not mandatory, but the government should prioritise public relief and be ready to declare a disaster zone if conditions worsen. Public buildings should be painted white to reflect heat, and shade and water facilities must be expanded," he added.

Basavaraj Biradar, an Agriculture Assets Technical Officer, blamed deforestation for the unrelenting heat. "Tree-cutting for urbanisation is drying up land and intensifying heat. The consequences of deforestation are severe. It leads to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and increased temperatures. The region is already experiencing extreme heatwaves, and deforestation is only exacerbating the problem."

Government's awareness drive

Bidar Deputy Commissioner Shilpa Sharma said the administration is launching public awareness campaigns to educate residents about heat safety, including staying hydrated, avoiding exertion during peak hours, and recognising signs of heatstrokes. "We are working to ensure essential facilities are accessible to all," Sharma said.

AC helmets for traffic cops

The Kalaburagi police have introduced air-conditioned helmets and masks to protect traffic officers from extreme temperatures and poor air quality. Police Commissioner Sharanappa SD announced that 10 AC helmets were issued on a pilot basis, with more to follow.

WHAT IS A 'STATE-SPECIFIC DISASTER'?

If the government declares Kalyana Karnataka a state-specific disaster zone, the following would be enabled

- Ex-gratia compensation to families of heatstroke victims.
- Allocation of emergency funds for relief.
- Enhanced disaster management and early warning systems.
- Deployment of mobile health units and installation of water and shade points.
- Long-term mitigation schemes, including heat-resistant infrastructure.

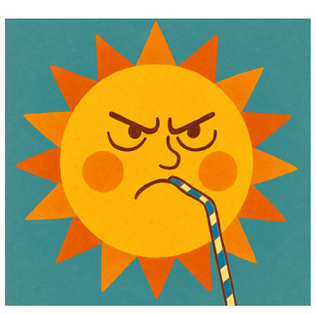
THE RISING MERCURY

Sl No	Districts	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	BAGALKOT	40.2	43	43	42.4
2	BALLARI	40.7	44.1	45.6	41
3	BELAGAVI	41.3	41.9	42.1	42
4	BENGALURU RURAL	38.6	39.3	38.8	41.8
5	BENGALURU URBAN	38.9	39.7	38.9	39.2
6	BIDAR	42.2	45.6	43.4	41.8
7	CHAMARAJANAGAR	40.1	38.1	39.6	40
8	CHIKKABALLAPUR	40.7	39.1	39.6	42
9	CHIKKAMAGALURU	39.6	39.9	41.1	40
10	CHITRADURGA	40.2	40.9	41.6	42
11	DAKSHINA KANNADA	40.7	39	41.9	42
12	DAVANGERE	40.7	40.8	41.7	42
13	DHARWAD	43.2	43.4	42.3	41.7
14	GADAG	41.5	43.4	42.6	42.96
15	HASSAN	38.9	39.2	39.4	40
16	HAVERI	42.2	41.7	43.4	42
17	KALABURAGI	42.5	44.4	44.9	43.1
18	KODAGU	39.3	36.9	38.5	40.2
19	KOLAR	39.9	40	39.9	42
20	KOPPAL	41.9	42.4	43.4	43.4
21	MANDYA	39.9	39.6	40.6	40
22	MYSURU	39.8	39.6	40.6	39
23	RAICHUR	42.6	44.8	44.8	45.6
24	RAMANAGARA	39.6	39.7	40.7	40
25	SHIVAMOGGA	40.6	39.7	41.5	40.2
26	TUMAKURU	40.7	41.4	41.4	42.1
27	UDUPI	38.9	38	41.9	40
28	UTTARA KANNADA	41.4	40.2	43.4	45.6
29	VIJAYAPURA	42.7	44.9	43.4	42.7
30	YADGIR	43.7	44	43.4	45

MLAS, OFFICIALS DEMAND URGENT RELIEF

The demand for formal disaster recognition is gaining momentum across the political spectrum. Bidar South BJP MLA and State Secretary Shailendra Beldale has called for the immediate release of Rs 1 crore per Assembly constituency, totalling Rs 6 crore for Bidar district, to combat acute water scarcity in over 100 residential areas. Humnabad BJP MLA Siddalingappa Patil supported the call: "Telangana has set a good example. Karnataka must also recognise heatwaves as state-specific disasters. People are crying out for help. Congress must respond with urgency. It's time for action, not just words." -Although Congress MLAs are yet to issue a statement, Taranum told Salar News that the government has urged the public to take necessary precautions during heatwave.

THE PLIGHT OF WORKERS



"I've been working in construction for over 15 years, and summers are the hardest. We start by 9am and rest an hour in the afternoon, but it's not enough. We bring water from home, but it gets hot quickly. There's no first-aid or medical help if someone falls sick" -Basavaraj Halladakeri, a labourer from Bidar

"We work under the blazing sun from morning till 5.30 pm with no proper breaks or protection. The heat is making us sick, but we have no choice—our wages are barely enough to survive or care for our families" -Sangeeta, a construction labourer from Bidar

"The heat is unbearable. I have two cows and a buffalo, and it's hard to find grass or water for them. I bring them home by afternoon to protect them. If any of them die from the heat, the government must give us compensation" -Siddu Pathedar, a farm worker from Yadgir

"Farmers in villages such as Yakshinthi, Gaudur, Tonnur, Kollur, Hayyala, Biikura, Anasur, Gondenur, Konkal, Tumakuru and others are losing crops to this unbearable heat. Rice, sugarcane, vegetables—all are drying up" -Ningappa Karadi, a farmer from Shahapur in Yadgir

"Working with burning stones under the scorching sun leaves us dehydrated—we keep drinking water but can't eat properly, and our health is suffering. There's no shade, no first-aid, no medical help at our site. No one visits us or offers any support" -Vishvaradhya Badigera, daily wage worker in Shahapur

"With the heat becoming unbearable, it's getting harder to do weeding and other farm work. Women farmers like me are struggling, and the government needs to step in to ensure our safety and support us during these tough times" -Shashikala, a farmer from Bidar

Pak wants to discuss Indus Treaty with India

India stays firm on its stance, citing 'change of circumstances'

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Weeks after India placed the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance following the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, Pakistan has signalled its willingness to discuss New Delhi's long-standing concerns about the treaty, sources said.

According to the sources, Pakistan's Water Resources Secretary Syed Ali Murtaza has responded to the Indian government's formal notification on the treaty's suspension.

In the letter to his Indian counterpart Debashree Mukherjee, Murtaza expressed his government's readiness to discuss specific objections raised by New Delhi. He also questioned the legal basis of India's move by pointing out that the treaty contains no exit clause.

Officials at India's Jal Shakti Ministry refused to officially comment on the development but government sources indicated that under the current circumstances, India's position is unlikely to change.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar speaks at the inauguration of the Embassy of Honduras in New Delhi on Thursday. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it "very clear" that any talks with Pakistan will be only on terror **PHOTO: PTI**

They said the decision to suspend the treaty was prompted by "sustained cross-border terrorism targeting Jammu and Kashmir".

In a letter dated 24 April, Mukherjee had informed Murtaza that "Pakistan's refusal to engage in negotiations as envisaged under the treaty and its continued sponsorship of terrorism constituted a breach of the treaty".

Pakistan's latest appeal – described in the letter as a call to reconsider the decision due to the dependence of millions on the regulated waters – was delivered even as India carried out flushing and desilting operations at the Baglihar and Salal hydropower projects on the Chenab river.

While Murtaza's letter shows Pakistan has softened its stance, the sources said the tone of the communication remains combative, with Islamabad terming India's move "unilateral and illegal".

But Indian officials said the principle of "change of circumstances", as seen through repeated acts of terrorism, as well as climate change, provides grounds for a review of the treaty. *—PTI*

PAHALGAM AFTERMATH

India pushes UN to list LeT proxy TRF as terror outfit

UNITED NATIONS, 15 MAY

An Indian delegation met top officials of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate here, even as New Delhi stepped up efforts to designate The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy for Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), as a UN-listed terror outfit.

The Resistance Front had claimed responsibility for the attack that killed 26 people in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

A statement from the UNOCT and CTCED of the meeting with the Indian team on Wednesday said the UN Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and Assistant Secretary-General Natalia Gherman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate "met with a delegation of the Government of the Republic of India."

Randhir Jaiswali **PHOTO: PTI**

The development comes in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, retaliatory Operation Sindoor launched by India targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

India's push at the UN also comes after the UN Security Council issued a Press Statement, in which the members condemned the Pahalgam attack "in the strongest terms" but did not mention TRF as the group responsible for the attack.

The participants also discussed efforts to counter the use of emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, in line with the 2022 Delhi Declaration adopted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee. *—PTI*

- The development comes in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, retaliatory Operation Sindoor. The UN Security Council issued a Press Statement condemning the Pahalgam attack "in the strongest terms", but did not mention TRF as the group responsible for the attack

Col Sofiya row: SC refuses to stall FIR against Min

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday reprimanded Madhya Pradesh minister Vijay Shah for his remarks targeting Col Sofiya Qureshi and rejected his plea to stay the FIR ordered by the MP High Court until he is heard.

The bench of Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih asked Shah's advocate Vibha Datta Makhija to approach the HC for relief.

Makhija told the court that the minister has expressed remorse. "It was a statement which was misunderstood. That I can justify to your lordships...He (Shah) never meant what is being made out by the media," she said.

"Now, the FIR is already registered," the bench said.

Makhija said Shah was seeking a stay on the FIR until he heard by the high court. "I am just praying that till he (Shah) is heard, no action be taken," she said. The bench responded, "Merely because somebody is a minister, should we entertain it? Go and apply before the high court."

When Makhija urged the apex court to see the high court's order, the bench said, "We will have it tomorrow."

Sofiya Qureshi **PHOTO: ANI**

- The bench of Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih asked Madhya Pradesh minister Vijay Shah's advocate Vibha Datta Makhija to approach the Hight Court for relief

The bench also rejected a petition filed by a lawyer, seeking action against Shah. "We don't want these publicity litigations," it said. *—PTI*

Centre may discourage weddings, film-shoots in Turkey, Azerbaijan

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Indian government may soon discourage tourism, destination weddings, and film shooting in Turkey and Azerbaijan due to their vocal support for Pakistan during the recent conflict under Operation Sindoor, official sources said.

Both countries backed Pakistan and criticised India's strikes on terror camps in Pakistan and PoK. Pakistan also deployed Turkish drones extensively during the conflict. In response, India is reassessing its ties, including trade and cultural engagements.

Educational institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) have suspended or are reviewing collaborations with Turkish universities. The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) and All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) have urged a boycott of Turkiye for film shoots, a move expected to receive government backing.

Members of Rashtriya Bajrang Dal raise slogans during a protest against Pakistan, Turkiye and China, in Jammu on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

India is considering ways to reduce the flow of Indian tourists and curb extravagant destination weddings hosted by wealthy Indians and NRIs in these countries. Turkiye and Azerbaijan have been popular for their scenic beauty and luxurious venues.

In 2023, around 3 lakh Indians visited Turkiye and over 2 lakh travelled to Azerbaijan. India exported goods worth USD 5.2 billion to Turkiye and USD 86 million to Azerbaijan in 2024–25 (April–February). Imports from both countries include oil, chemicals, marble, apples, and other commodities.

India was Azerbaijan's third-largest crude oil buyer in 2023. *—PTI*

Assam's AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam detained under NSA

NAGAON, 15 MAY

Aminul Islam, a three-time MLA from the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), has been detained under the National Security Act in Assam. The Nagaon politician was previously arrested on sedition charges for allegedly making inflammatory remarks defending Pakistan's involvement in the recent Pahalgam terror attack, which resulted in 26 fatalities. Released on bail, he was immediately detained again. Assam's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma cited a report highlighting Islam's provocative comments linking the attack to a governmental conspiracy. The AIUDF stated that Islam's views do not represent the party's stance. Islam has a history of previous legal issues, with 23 registered cases against him. *—PTI*

Congress to hold Jai Hind Sabhas amid security concerns

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Indian National Congress has announced plans to conduct 'Jai Hind Sabhas' in 15 states from 20–30 May, focusing on questions surrounding national security and the recent Pahalgam terror attack. Party officials, including general secretary K C Venugopal, stated the assemblies aim to both pay tribute to the armed forces' bravery and scrutinise the government's handling of security lapses. Tensions have risen following US President Trump's claims of mediating a ceasefire with Pakistan, which the Congress finds concerning. The party is determined to address perceived accountability failures amid escalating security concerns and political discourse surrounding national safety. *—PTI*

Trader claims Pak threat amid Turkey apple boycott

PUNE, 15 MAY

Following a boycott of Turkey apples by local traders in response to the country's support for Pakistan, a Pune trader has reported receiving a threatening voice message from Pakistan. Suyog Zende, a trader at the Agriculture Produce Market Committee, stated he began receiving calls early in the morning prior to receiving a voice note containing derogatory remarks about India and claims that Pakistan could not be harmed.

In protest, traders at the market threw Turkey apples on the road. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis commended the traders for prioritising national interests and expressed confidence in India's strength, reassuring them that threats would not deter their resolve. "The government will provide protection," he stated, emphasising the importance of standing firm in their decision to boycott imports from Turkey. *—PTI*

FORCES ALERT AS DRONE SPOTTED IN RAJ

JAIPUR, 15 MAY

A drone found in a field at Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar district along the India-Pakistan border on Thursday morning has prompted the police and Border Security Force personnel to stay alert.

Villagers in Anupgarh area spotted the drone around 9.45am and immediately alerted local authorities. Anupgarh Station House Officer Ishwar Jangid said he alerted the BSF and reached the spot with a police team.

The 5–7 feet long drone was found with its camera module broken and detached. "We have seized the drone. The area is being thoroughly examined. A bomb disposal squad has also been called in as a precautionary measure," Jangid said, adding that it will be sent for forensic and technical analysis to determine its origin and purpose.

Sources said the incident is being treated as serious, given the strategic location of Sri Ganganagar on the international border. *—PTI*

RaGa defies ban to address Ambedkar hostel students

DARBHANGA, 15 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday defied police ban and addressed students of the Ambedkar Hostel in Darbhanga launching 'Shiksha Nyay Samvad', a public interaction programme in Bihar where assembly polls are due later this year.

Permission for holding the event had been denied by the administration earlier, evoking outrage from the party which rejected the suggestion that the programme be held at an alternative venue.

Rahul Gandhi walks to the venue of Shiksha Nyay Samvad programme after his convoy was stopped by police in Darbhanga on Thursday **PHOTO: ANI**

Donning his trademark white polo T-shirt and cargo pants, Gandhi spoke into a hand-held mic and the crowds erupted in chants of 'Jai Bhim' when, towards the end of his speech, he held aloft a portrait of Dr B R Ambedkar.

He said to a packed crowd, the government in Bihar could not stop him because he was 'propelled' by people's energy, "before which Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to bow."

Gandhi also claimed that Modi had agreed to hold a caste census 'out of fear' of the country's deprived population to which the opposition was lending its voice. *—PTI*

DRDO develops membrane for sea water desalination

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has announced the successful development of a new "nanoporous multilayered polymeric membrane" designed for high-pressure seawater desalination. Developed by the Defence Materials Stores and Research & Development Establishment in Kanpur, this technology addresses challenges faced by desalination plants on Indian Coast Guard vessels. Completed in just eight months, initial trials have shown satisfactory performance, with final operational clearance pending 500 hours of testing. The DRDO described this achievement as a significant advancement in India's endeavour for self-reliance, supporting the feasibility of desalination in coastal areas following necessary modifications. *—PTI*

OP SINDOOR REMARKS

Cong reminds Tharoor of 'Lakshman Rekha'

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Congress has reportedly pulled up senior party leader Shashi Tharoor, Thiruvananthapuram MP for crossing the "Lakshman Rekha" by deviating from party line on Operation Sindoor and subsequent ceasefire announcement saying that it is not the time to air individual views but to amplify the party's official stand.

Thiruvananthapuram MP had come out in praise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that he has handled it "extremely well" and criticised the US President Donald Trump for claiming he 'brokered' a ceasefire between India and Pakistan with his critics saying he has become an effective spokesperson of the government.

The Thiruvananthapuram MP had come out in praise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that he has handled it "extremely well" **PHOTO: PTI**

While asked about Tharoor's comments in recent interviews being at odds with the party's stand, senior party leader Jairam Ramesh replied, "It is his opinion. When Tharoor sahab speaks, it is not the party's opinion."

Tharoor's criticism came in his presence at the CWC meeting, which also saw the attendance of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Congress general secretaries KC Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Sachin Pilot, Randeep Surjewala Mukul Wasnik, P Chidambaram, and Ambika Soni.

The opposition, has been requesting an all-party meeting to question the government regarding Trump's claims that his administration helped broker a "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan.

BJP IT Cell chief Amit Malviya praised Tharoor in his post on X saying "The Congress party has distanced itself from Shashi Tharoor's statement upholding India's sovereignty and its decision to defend itself against external aggression. It is ironic that Tharoor is perhaps the only Congress leader who made sense and stood with India in this situation." *—PTI*

Postal ballots were opened in '89 polls: CPI(M) veteran

ALAPPUZHA, 15 MAY

CPI(M) veteran and former Kerala Minister G Sudhakaran, in a viral video of a recent NGO function, allegedly stated that the postal ballots for the Alappuzha Lok Sabha polls in 1989 were unsealed to identify which members of the party-backed NGO union voted for the opposition party candidate, warning that NGO union members should not cast their votes for rival candidates.

"We will unseal them, verify, and correct them. Even if a case is filed against me for saying this, I don't mind," he is quoted as saying in the video aired by news channels.

He said KV Devadas, leader of CPI(M)-backed a school teachers' association, contested for Parliament from Alappuzha, postal ballots were unsealed and examined at the district committee office. "It was found that 15 per cent had voted for the opposing candidate. Patching up what's broken isn't difficult," he said.

It was not clear from the video who allegedly did the tampering of postal ballots during the 1989 election.

Sudhakaran said that Devadas had contested against Congress leader Vakkam Purushothaman in that election and lost by 18,000 votes. However, the Election Commission documents say Purushothaman won by a margin of 25,123 votes. *—PTI*

G Sudhakaran **PHOTO: FB**

SC firm on forest restoration in T'gana

Warns govt it will send officials to jail unless they reverse the 'pre-planned' felling of trees

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday said felling of trees next to the University of Hyderabad prima facie appeared to be "pre-planned" and asked the Telangana government to restore it or its officials could land in jail.

A bench of Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih said it was for the state government to make a choice between restoring the forest or send their officials to prison.

The bench also questioned why trees were felled taking advantage of a long weekend.

While taking suo motu cognisance of the deforestation activities in the Kancha Gachibowli Forest, the apex court on 3 April ordered a status quo until further orders.

The senior advocate appearing for Telangana government said there was no activity being carried out at the site.

The Forest Survey of India gave a report to the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) after using satellite imagery indicating only 60 per cent of the total 104 acre area, where trees were felled, was moderately dense and heavily dense forest.

For felling trees the state was required to take requisite permission.

One of the advocates in the matter said if restoration of forest has to be done, it has to be done during the upcoming monsoon period.

He said no restoration plan was placed before the court by the state.

During the hearing, another advocate said he filed an application on behalf of whistleblower students who wanted to save the forest. While the students faced FIRs, examination in the university was underway. The bench said the applicants could move a separate plea raising their grievances. *—PTI*

One of the advocates for the cause said if restoration of forest has to be done, it has to be done during the upcoming monsoon period and no restoration plan has been placed before the court by the state **PHOTO: PTI**

SC to hear pleas on Waqf law provisions on 20 May

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will take up on 20 May the issue of interim relief on pleas challenging validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

A bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih asked the counsels appearing for those challenging the validity of the law and the Centre to file their written notes by 19 May.

The law officer said the Centre assured that neither waqf properties would be denotified nor would appointments be made to the Central Waqf Council or State Waqf Boards under the new law.

On 25 April the Centre filed a preliminary affidavit defending the amended Act. *—PTI*

SC UPHOLDS BIHAR POLITICIAN'S LIFE TERM

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court has upheld the life term given to criminal-turned-politician Vijay Kumar Shukla alias Munna Shukla for the murder of former RJD minister Brij Bihari Prasad in Patna in 1998.

A bench dismissed pleas of Shukla and a co-convict, Mantu Tiwari seeking a review of the verdict that had earlier convicted both in the case. *—PTI*

Man found shot dead in naxal-hit area of Jharkhand

BOKARO, 15 MAY

A 52-year-old man was discovered dead with a gunshot wound to the back of his neck in the Naxal-affected Bokaro district of Jharkhand on Thursday. The victim, identified as Hemlal Pandit, was reportedly shot on Wednesday night at Baradih forest, near Kukubilwa village, within the jurisdiction of Nawadih police station. Bermo sub-divisional police officer BN Singh confirmed that an investigation is underway to determine if the murder is connected to Maoist activities. Pandit, known for his practice of herbal medicine, was involved in supplying herbs to local villagers in forested areas. Authorities have launched an investigation. *—PTI*

Jobless teachers protest outside WB minister's office

KOLKATA, 15 MAY

Hundreds of teachers rendered jobless by a Supreme Court ruling protested Thursday outside the West Bengal Education Department office in Salt Lake, demanding their jobs be reinstated. The demonstrators gathered at Bikash Bhavan, the office of the state's education minister, causing significant traffic disruption. Police erected barricades to maintain order as protesters attempted to breach them in their pursuit of job restoration. The Supreme Court upheld a Calcutta High Court decision that annulled the appointments of 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff in West Bengal, citing irregularities in the 2016 recruitment process. In response to the unrest, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced on Wednesday that temporary monthly allowances would be provided to the affected Group C and Group D employees. The payments of Rs 25,000 and Rs 20,000 respectively will be disbursed under the newly launched West Bengal Livelihood and Social Security Scheme, effective from 1 April, 2025. *—PTI*

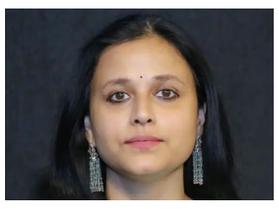


PHOTO: ANI

Assam academic first Indian on Cambridge's SHEAC

GUWAHATI, 15 MAY

Professor Upasana Mahanta has made history by becoming the first Indian member of the Strategic Higher Education Advisory Council (SHEAC) at Cambridge International. The appointment recognises her among distinguished leaders in admissions and enrolment from top global universities, including Oxford and MIT. The SHEAC plays a vital role in enhancing the global recognition of Cambridge qualifications. A native of Sivasagar, Mahanta is currently the dean at OP Jindal Global University. She has previously served as a faculty member at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, focusing her academic work on law, gender, and social justice. *—PTI*

Tiger mauls to death 45-yr-old man in Kerala

MALAPPURAM, 15 MAY

A 45-year-old rubber-tapping worker was killed by a tiger in the wee hours of Thursday when he was on his way to work near Kalikavu here, police said. Another tapping worker who was with the victim said the animal attacked and dragged off Gafoor, police said. A forest official said the tiger dragged Gafoor around 200 meters into the forest, and there were bite marks on several parts of the body. Following the incident, local residents gathered in the area in large numbers and obstructed the removal of the body, alleging lapses on the part of the forest department in preventing the incident. *—PTI*

The site of encounter is close to the India-Myanmar international border in a hilly terrain that has scant human inhabitation **PHOTO: ANI**

Assam Rifles shoot dead 10 militants in Manipur's Chandel

IMPHAL, 15 MAY

Operations were underway on Thursday morning after Assam Rifles gunned down 10 militants in an encounter in Manipur's Chandel district.

The site of the encounter is close to the India-Myanmar international border in the hilly terrain of Chandel district. It is 130 km from the state capital Imphal and has scant human inhabitation.

Kohima-based Defence PRO said, "The operation is still underway on Thursday morning and more information will be shared only when it is over."

When asked about the identity of the militants involved, a central security official said, "The troops are still conducting operations and the identity is yet to be confirmed."

The Army's Eastern Command said in a post on X on Wednesday, "Acting on specific intelligence on movement of armed cadres near the New Samtal village, Khengjoy tehsil, Chandel district, close to the Indo-Myanmar border, Assam Rifles unit under Spear Corps launched an operation on 14 May."

"During the operation, the troops were fired upon by suspected cadres to which they quickly reacted, redeployed and retaliated in a calibrated and measured manner. In the ensuing firefight, 10 cadres were neutralised and a sizeable quantity of arms and ammunition were recovered," it added. *—PTI*

Delhi HC rejects TMC MP's sealed cover apology

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Delhi High Court has refused to accept the apology of TMC MP SaketGokhale in a sealed cover over a plea of former diplomat Lakshmi MurdeshwarPuri and said he has 'tarried and procrastinated' but not complied with its verdict.

Purihad moved the high court in 2021, alleging Gokhale tarnished her reputation by making reckless and false allegations about her financial affairs in the context of an apartment that she owned in Geneva.

On 1 July, 2024, the high court restrained the TMC MP from publishing any more content on social media or electronic platforms and said damages of Rs 50 lakh should be paid to Puri within 8 weeks aside from an apology that would be retained on Gokhale's X handle for 6 months from the date of publishing.

Gokhale, the court observed, was a parliamentarian and even after 10 months, the July 2024 judgment had not been complied.

It refused to then accept the apology in a sealed cover andorderedhim to publish the apology as given in the judgment. Regardingwillful disobedience of the order, the Court said itwould be considered after hearing the parties. *—PTI*

BLANKET OF WOES

A layer of dust covered the national capital on Thursday morning, reducing visibility and leading to the air quality slipping into the poor category after remaining in the moderate range for the past few weeks. The dust storms were triggered 30 to 40 kmph winds, said the India Meteorological Department **PHOTO: PTI**

Assam govt to shift police battalion to evicted site

GUWAHATI, 15 MAY

The Assam government is planning to relocate a state police battalion from the heart of the state capital to the city's outskirts, where an eviction drive took place a few months ago in which two persons were killed and many injured, officials said on Thursday.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday visited the evicted land at Kachutali in Sonapur revenue circle of Kamrup Metropolitan district to review the situation and said the 10th Assam Police Battalion is being shifted to the site to protect it from future encroachment.

"This area falls under the tribal belt and block, where only government projects can be developed," a senior official said. *—PTI*

Andhra amends admission rules; locals get priority

AMARAVATI, 15 MAY

The Andhra Pradesh government has revised admission regulations for higher educational institutions, eliminating a 15 per cent non-local reservation. Effective from the 2025-26 academic year, students from other states, including Telangana, will no longer be eligible for admissions under this quota, which will now be exclusively for Andhra Pradesh residents.

With the new guidelines, admissions for various courses, including engineering, pharmacy, and law, will prioritise local students. This change follows the expiry of a ten-year common admission process, which allowed students from Telangana to participate after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. The order responds to numerous appeals from parents and students aimed at safeguarding local interests.

The government said local candidates will be allocated 85 per cent of seats, with the remaining 15 per cent going to the non-local quota. *—PTI*

T'gana women wash Miss World contestants' feet, spark row

HYDERABAD, 15 MAY

A video showing some women helping wash the feet of Miss World contestants at Ramappa temple on Thursday sparked controversy with opposition BRS and BJP flaying the act, terming it an insult to Telangana women.

The state government responded to the claim in a post on X, saying, "This is a tradition we follow in accordance with the dictum 'Atithi Devo Bhava'".

The contestants, dressed in sarees, visited the historical Ramappa Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as part of their heritage tour in the state on Wednesday.

After they reached the site, some women were seen in the video pouring water on the feet of the contestants, who were seated in a row, to wash their feet. One woman was seen wiping the feet of a contestant with a towel and the video went viral.

Local Dalit, tribal and economically disadvantaged women were "forced to wash and wipe" the feet of foreign beauty pageant participants – a blow to the state's self-respect, BRS said in a press release.

The BJP said the incident exposed the Congress' century-old legacy of making Indians kneel before foreigners to appease their high command. *—PTI*

Miss World 2025 contestants wash their feet before entering the Ramappa temple in Mulugu district of Telangana on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Iran looks at India for cheetah revival tips: RTI

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Iran, working to save its rapidly declining cheetah population, has shown interest in learning cheetah management from India, according to information received through an RTI application.

Rajesh Gopal, chairman of the government's Cheetah Project Steering Committee, shared this information during a meeting of the panel in February.

"In a recent meeting, Iranian officials have expressed their interest in learning cheetah management in India," the minutes of the meeting quoted Gopal as saying.

He also suggested that the International Big Cat Alliance, an India-led initiative, could reach out to other cheetah range countries interested in learning about cheetah conservation and management.

Iran is yet to formally approach India in this regard.

The government's "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetahs in India" also mentions that India would be willing to assist Iran and the global conservation community in efforts to protect the critically endangered Iranian cheetah.

The cheetah is the only large carnivore that became extinct in India, primarily due to over-hunting and habitat loss. The last known cheetah in the country died in 1948 in the Sal forests of Chhattisgarh's Koriya district. *—PTI*

AXIOM-4 MISSION TO ISS

Indian astronaut to travel to space in June

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station, piloted by Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla with three other crew members will be launched from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on 8 June.

US-based commercial human spaceflight firm, Axiom Space and NASA announced it.

Shukla's travel to space, onboard SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft, comes four decades after Rakesh Sharma's iconic spaceflight in 1984.

Shukla, hailing from Lucknow, is an Indian Air Force test pilot. He completed his military training and earned a BSc degree from the National Defence Academy in 2005. In 2006 he was commissioned as a flying officer.

He was included in the astronaut selection process in 2019 for the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme. He was later selected in the final four by the Institute of Aerospace Medicine and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

Shubhanshu Shukla **PHOTO: ANI**

- Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, hailing from Lucknow, is an Indian Air Force test pilot. He was included in the astronaut selection process in 2019 for the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme. He was later selected in the final four by the Institute of Aerospace Medicine and Indian Space Research Organisation

Besides Shukla, the crew includes Polish astronaut Slawosz Uznanski, European Space Agency (ESA) project astronaut and Hungarian astronaut Tibor Kapu and American astronaut Peggy Whitson.

This marks Poland and Hungary's first mission to the International Space Station in history and the second government-sponsored human spaceflight mission in over 40 years.

Shukla will conduct seven experiments in space that are aimed at encouraging microgravity research in India, which hopes to build its own space station by 2035 and send astronauts to the moon by 2047.

ISRO has drawn up plans to focus on India-centric food to carry out experiments on the ISS, including sprouting methi (Fenugreek) and moong (green gram) in microgravity conditions.

The Ax-4 crew will launch aboard a SpaceX Dragon spacecraft to the space station and spend up to 14 days at the orbiting laboratory. *—PTI*

UK set to be G7's fastest-growing economy in Q1

LONDON, 15 MAY

The British economy grew at its fastest rate in a year during the first quarter of 2025, official figures showed Thursday. It was a welcome boost to the Labour government, which has made lifting the country's growth its top priority. The Office for National Statistics said growth, as measured by the GDP, increased by 0.7 per cent in the first quarter of the year from the final three months of 2024. Treasury chief Rachel Reeves, who was on a visit to a Rolls-Royce factory in Derby, said, "We're set to be the fastest growing economy in the G-7 in the first three months of this year and that's incredibly welcome, but I know that there is more to do." *—PTI*

Indian-origin techie killed in US climbing mishap

NEW YORK, 15 MAY

Indian-origin techie Vishnu Irigireddy was among the three persons killed in a tragic climbing accident in Washington state's North Cascades Range of western North America. Vishnu, 48, a resident of Seattle, was attempting to climb North Early Winters Spire area of the Cascades along with his three friends – Tim Nguyen, 63, Oleksander Martynenko, 36 and Anton Tselykh, 38 – on Saturday, when the accident happened, NBC News reported. The group noticed a storm coming and started to retreat. During their descent, the team's anchor point failed and sent the group plunging 200 feet down, Climbing website reported. Tselykh, the sole surviving climber of the dangerous fall, drove 64 kilometres to inform the authorities about the accident that killed his three friends. *—PTI*

Indian jailed in Singapore for molestation

SINGAPORE, 15 MAY

A 20-year-old Indian has been sentenced to three weeks in jail for molesting a stewardess while on board a Singapore Airlines flight from Perth to Singapore. Rajat, who goes by only his first name, pleaded guilty on Wednesday to using criminal force with the intent to outrage modesty, The Straits Times said on Thursday. Rajat had grasped the stewardess from behind and pushed her into a lavatory with him during the Singapore Airlines flight on 28 February. He was arrested once the plane arrived at Changi Airport. Seeking a jail term of three to six weeks, Deputy Public Prosecutor Eugene Lau said the stewardess had suffered some degree of psychological harm, noting that she felt afraid, disgusted and humiliated. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X@v____marquez/Instagram)

Influencer shot dead in Mexico during livestream

MEXICO CITY, 15 MAY

A social media influencer was shot dead while doing a TikTok livestream at a beauty salon in the central Mexican state of Jalisco, state authorities confirmed on Wednesday. The violence shocked the Latin American nation at a time when rival cartels have fought bloody wars for territorial control in much of Mexico. Valeria Márquez, 23, appeared to have been speaking to a delivery man off camera on her livestream on Tuesday when she was shot once in the chest and once in the head, killing her instantly. The model and beauty influencer was inside a beauty salon, when it happened. A few hours later, Mexican PRI party leader Luis Armando Córdova Díaz was also shot dead in a cafe in the area. *—PTI*

Zelenskyy lands in Turkey for peace talks; Putin stays away

Ukrainian President will join the meet only if Putin is present

ISTANBUL, 15 MAY

A low-ranking Russian delegation arrived in Istanbul for peace talks with Ukraine, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Thursday, while a Ukrainian delegation led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and including other senior government figures landed in the Turkish capital Ankara.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was not part of the Moscow delegation, according to a list released by the Kremlin Wednesday night, prompting criticism from Western officials that the Kremlin isn't serious about the peace effort.

Vladimir Medinsky, an aide to Putin, will lead the Russian team that will also include three other senior officials, the Kremlin said. Putin also appointed four lower-level officials as "experts" for the talks.

In addition to Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian delegation comprises Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, and the head of the Ukrainian Presidential Office Andriy Yermak.

But Zelenskyy will sit at the table only with Putin, Ukraine's presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said.

Details about whether, when and where the Ukrainian delegation might meet their Russian counterparts are still unclear but is expected to be clarified after Zelenskyy and Erdogan meet, according to a Ukrainian official who requested anonymity to speak openly about the day's plan.

Earlier this week, Zelenskyy challenged the Russian leader to meet in person in Turkey to talk about ending the more than three-year war. Zelenskyy said he would travel to Ankara to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and wait for Putin.

Putin on Wednesday evening held a meeting with senior government officials and members of the delegation in preparation for the talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Defence Minister Andrei Belousov, General Staff chief Valery Gerasimov, and National Security Council secretary Sergei Shoigu attended the meeting, among others. *—PTI*

In addition to Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian delegation included Defence Minister Rustem Umerov and Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha **PHOTO: PTI**

> **I didn't think it was possible for Putin to go if I'm not there**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

A Palestinian walks on the rubble of a house destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, on Wednesday night. A photojournalist counted 10 airstrikes on the city overnight **PHOTO: PTI**

Overnight airstrikes kill 54 in Gaza

KHAN YOUNIS/ WASHINGTON 15 MAY

Multiple airstrikes hit Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis overnight, killing more than 50 people in a second consecutive night of heavy bombing.

An Associated Press cameraman in Khan Younis counted 10 airstrikes on the city overnight into Thursday, and saw numerous bodies taken to the morgue in the city's Nasser Hospital. Some bodies arrived in pieces, with some body bags containing the remains of multiple people. The hospital's morgue confirmed 54 people had been killed.

The dead included a journalist working for Qatari television network Al Araby TV, the network announced on social media, saying Hasan Samour had been killed along with 11 members of his family in one of the strikes.

It was the second night of heavy bombing, after airstrikes Wednesday on northern and southern Gaza killed at least 70 people, including almost two dozen children.

Meanwhile, a new humanitarian organisation, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which has US backing is set to take over aid delivery to starving civilians in Gaza. It said it expects to begin operations before the end of the month — after what it describes as key agreements from Israeli officials. A statement from the group identified several US military veterans, former humanitarian coordinators and security contractors that would lead the delivery effort.

The foundation however has failed to address questions including who would fund the work and how much involvement the US, Israel or any other government or military would have. *—PTI*

CANADA'S NEW CABINET REDUCES INCOME TAX

OTTAWA, 15 MAY

Following the unveiling of a new cabinet, Canada has announced a significant personal income tax cut as one of the government's top legislative priorities for the new parliamentary session. The proposal will see the lowest marginal personal income tax rate reduced from 15 per cent to 14 per cent, effective from 1 July, 2025.

It will benefit nearly 22 million Canadians. A finance department statement said, "Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Francois-Philippe Champagne, today announced one of the first orders of business on the government's legislative agenda for the new session of Parliament: tax relief for nearly 22 million Canadians, saving two-income families up to USD 840 a year in 2026."

"Once legislated, the lowest marginal personal income tax rate will be reduced from 15 per cent to 14 per cent, effective July 1, 2025. This income tax reduction will help hard-working Canadians keep more of their paycheques to spend where it matters most. This measure is expected to deliver over USD 27 billion in tax savings to Canadians over five years, starting in 2025–26," the finance department added. *—ANI*

US, Iran nearing N-deal: Trump

DOHA, 15 MAY

US President Donald Trump said Thursday that the United States and Iran have "sort of" agreed to terms on a nuclear deal, offering a measure of confidence that an accord is coming into sharper focus.

Trump, in an exchange with reporters at a business roundtable in Doha, Qatar, described the talks between American envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi as "very serious negotiations" for "long-term peace" and were continuing to progress.

Still, throughout his visit with Arab Gulf leaders this week, the president has underscored that military action against Iran's nuclear facilities remains a possibility if the talks derail.

"Iran has sort of agreed to the terms: They're not going to make, I call it, in a friendly way, nuclear dust," Trump said at the business event. "We're not going to be making any nuclear dust in Iran."

Without offering detail, he signalled growing alignment with the terms that he has been seeking.

They can't have a nuclear weapon. That's the only thing. It's very simple," Trump said. *—PTI*

AL JAZEERA SOFTENS DURING TRUMP'S VISIT

DOHA, 15 MAY

Qatar's satellite news channel Al Jazeera muted its typical critiques of American foreign policy during President Donald Trump's visit to the Gulf Arab nation this week.

The state-run publication often took editorial positions at odds with America's interests during the wars that followed the 11 September, 2001.

The channel, which broadcasts in Arabic and English, broadly covered Trump's visit in a straightforward manner, highlighting it was the first-ever trip to Qatar by a sitting American leader.

Al Jazeera did not include mentions of the Israel-Hamas war in any critiques of US policy, instead, highlighted Qatar's ruler,Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani calling for a truce. *—PTI*

US sells $225M missiles to Turkey

Washington, 15 May

The US State Department authorised a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case for Turkey to purchase AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related elements of logistics and program support for an estimated cost of USD 225 million. In a statement, the US State Department said, "This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security of the United States by improving the security of a NATO Ally that continues to be a force for political and economic stability in Europe... There will be no adverse impact on US defence readiness as a result of this proposed sale." *—ANI*

Indian student freed from detention

Alvarado, 15 May

A Georgetown University scholar from India was released from immigration detention Wednesday after a federal judge's ruling. Badar Khan Suri was arrested in the Trump administration's crackdown on foreign college students. Suri will go to his family in Virginia while he awaits the outcome of his petition against the wrongful arrest and detention. He's also facing deportation proceedings in an immigration court in Texas. *—PTI*

NATO DEBATES HIKING DEFENCE FUNDS

ANTALYA, 15 MAY

NATO foreign ministers convened on Thursday to discuss a US proposal to significantly increase defence spending to five per cent of GDP over the next seven years. This demand arises as the US pivots its focus towards security challenges outside of Europe, particularly concerning China.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte emphasised the urgent need for greater military investment to counter threats from Russia, terrorism, and an emerging focus on China. He noted that Russia could rebuild its military forces within three to five years post-Ukraine conflict.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated, "The alliance is only as strong as its weakest link," reinforcing that the investment request centres on modernising capabilities to address contemporary threats.

Currently, NATO members have agreed to allocate at least two per cent of their GDP to defence. *—PTI*

Around 100 graves of Ahmadis desecrated in Pak

LAHORE, 15 MAY

Police rescue members of Ahmadi community from Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan activists during a recent protest in Khushab district **PHOTO: PTI**

Around 100 graves belonging to the minority Ahmadi community of Pakistan have been desecrated in Punjab province, police said on Thursday.

The latest incidents takes the number of Ahmadi graves desecrated to 269 in this year across the country.

Radical Islamist party, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), is suspected of demolishing the gravestones of Ahmadi graves two days ago in Khushab district, some 250kms from Lahore, Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya Pakistan spokesperson Aamir Mahmood said.

"It is noteworthy that some individuals affiliated with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik, Pakistan (TLP) were involved in spreading hatred and inciting violence against the local Ahmadi residents," Mahmood said.

He also accused some police officials of pressuring the local Ahmadis to demolish these gravestones themselves. "The community has clearly refused to do so," Mahmood said. *—PTI*

'MAKE ARGENTINA GREAT AGAIN'

Argentina orders immigration crackdown

BUENOS AIRES, 15 MAY

Argentina's Right-wing President Javier Milei issued a decree on Wednesday curbing immigration, a move coinciding with the immigration restrictions put in place by the Trump administration.

In a country that has long prided itself on its openness to immigrants, Milei's declaration that newcomers were bringing "chaos and abuse" to Argentina drew criticism from his political opponents and prompted comparisons to American President Donald Trump.

Milei's government welcomed those parallels to its close American ally, with Presidential Spokesperson Manuel Adorni saying it was "time to honour our history and make Argentina great again."

Wednesday's executive order tightens restrictions on citizenship, requiring immigrants to spend two uninterrupted years in Argentina or make a significant financial investment in the country to secure an Argentine passport. Immigrants seeking permanent residency must show proof of income or "sufficient means" and have clean criminal records in their home countries.

The decree makes it easier for the government to deport migrants who enter the country illegally, falsify their immigration documents or commit minor crimes in Argentina.

Previously, authorities could only expel or deny entry to a foreigner with a conviction of more than three years.

It also asks the judiciary to fast-track otherwise lengthy immigration court proceedings.

The new decree also charges foreigners to access Argentina's public health care and education while mandating that all travellers to the country hold health insurance. Adorni claimed that public hospitals had spent some USD 100 million on treating foreigners last year, without offering evidence.

"This measure aims to guarantee the sustainability of the public health system, so that it ceases to be a profit centre financed by our citizens," he said.

"For some time now, we've had regulations that invite chaos and abuse by many opportunists who are far from coming to this country in an honest way," Adorni told reporters. *—PTI*

President Javier Milei's requires immigrants to spend two uninterrupted years in Argentina or make a significant financial investment to secure an Argentine passport **PHOTO: X**

EU accuses TikTok of breaching digital rules

LONDON, 15 MAY

European Union regulators accused TikTok on Thursday of breaching digital safety rules because of shortcomings in the video sharing app's online ad database.

TikTok's ad repository isn't up to the standards required by the bloc's Digital Services Act, known as the DSA, the 27-nation EU's executive Commission said in preliminary findings from its investigation.

The Commission said ad databases are vital for researchers to detect scam ads as well as so-called hybrid threat campaigns, coordinated information operations and fake ads, "including in the context of elections".

The Commission said TikTok doesn't provide necessary information about the content of ads, the users targeted, and who pays for them.

The database doesn't allow for a comprehensive search for ads based on this information, "thereby limiting the usefulness of the tool," it said.

TikTok did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

The shortcomings in TikTok's ad database prevent a "full inspection" of the risks posed by its ad targeting systems, said Henna Virkkunen, the Commission's Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Rupee slumps 18 paise to close at 85.50 against USD

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

The rupee fell by 18 paise to close at 85.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, pressured by strong demand for the greenback from importers and foreign fund outflows. The currency opened at 85.53, touched a high of 85.48 and a low of 85.73, before settling at 85.50. On Wednesday, it had ended 4 paise higher at 85.32. Despite a weak rupee, gains in domestic equities and a drop in crude oil prices cushioned losses. Analysts expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias amid improving global sentiment and easing geopolitical tensions. Brent crude fell 3.72 per cent to $63.63/barrel. The Sensex surged 1,200 points, while FIIs bought equities worth Rs 931.80 crore. *—PTI*

Passenger vehicle dispatches rise 4% in April

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Passenger vehicle dispatches from factories to dealerships in India rose by 4 per cent year-on-year to 348,847 units in April, according to industry body SIAM. In comparison, dispatches stood at 335,629 units in April last year. However, two-wheeler dispatches fell by 17per cent year-on-year to 1,458,784 units in April. Meanwhile, wholesales of bikes, scooters and mopeds reached 1,751,393 units in April 2024, SIAM added. *—PTI*

Cochin Shipyard's Q4 net profit increases 10.93%

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

State-owned Cochin Shipyard Ltd reported a 10.93 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 287.18 crore for the March 2025 quarter, driven by increased income. The company had posted a profit of Rs 258.88 crore in the same quarter last year. Total income grew to Rs 1,914.79 crore from Rs 1,366.16 crore, while expenses rose to Rs 1,530.72 crore from Rs 1,023.84 crore. For the full financial year 2024-25, profit increased to Rs 827.33 crore from Rs 783.27 crore in FY24. The board recommended a final dividend of Rs 2.25 per share (face value Rs 5), adding to earlier interim dividends of Rs 3.50 (February 2025) and Rs 4.00 (November 2024). Cochin Shipyard is among India's leading shipbuilding and repair firms, with dedicated offshore construction facilities. *—PTI*

T'puram airport witnesses 10% passenger growth

T'PURAM, 15 MAY

Adani Airport Holdings Ltd, which operates Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, reported a 10 per cent rise in passenger traffic in the 2024-25 financial year, with 4,890,452 travellers, up from 4,411,235 the previous year. The airport saw its busiest day on 22 December, 2024, handling 16,578 passengers and 101 aircraft movements (ATMs), surpassing the earlier record set on 29 January. Average daily traffic now stands at 14,614 passengers and 86 ATMs. The airport connects to over nine domestic and 14 international destinations. A 6per cent increase in ATMs has been attributed to strategic upgrades in infrastructure and technology, reinforcing Thiruvananthapuram's emergence as a key aviation hub for Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Adani Group highlighted the airport's growing capacity to manage peak travel demands. *—PTI*

Sensex jumps 1,200 pts, Nifty reclaims 25K peak

BSE smallcap index gains 0.94%; midcap index rises 0.67%

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

Indian stock markets soared on Thursday, with the BSE Sensex surging 1,200 points and the NSE Nifty closing above the 25,000 mark for the first time in seven months, fuelled by broad-based buying and renewed foreign fund inflows.

Rising for a second consecutive session, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,200.18 points or 1.48 per cent to settle at a seven-month high of 82,530.74. The index touched an intraday high of 82,718.14, rising 1,387.58 points or 1.70 per cent, as gains intensified in the afternoon, led by banking, auto, IT, and oil & gas stocks. Of the 30 Sensex components, 29 ended in the green. The NSE Nifty also surged 395.20 points or 1.60 per cent to end at 25,062.10, its highest level since 15 October 2024, when it last closed above the 25,000 mark.

Tata Motors led the rally among Sensex constituents, climbing over 4 per cent. Other major gainers included HCL Tech, Adani Ports, Maruti, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and Infosys. IndusInd Bank was the only loser in the index.

Tata Motors led the rally among Sensex constituents, climbing over 4 per cent. Other major gainers included HCL Tech, Adani Ports, Maruti and Reliance Industries. *PHOTO: X*

Broader markets also advanced, with the BSE smallcap index gaining 0.94 per cent and the midcap index up 0.67 per cent. All sectoral indices closed higher, led by realty (up 1.87 per cent), auto (1.86 per cent), services (1.85 per cent), industrials (1.62 per cent), metal (1.60 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.57 per cent) and commodities (1.51 per cent). *—PTI*

The report by Deloitte notes a 10 per cent rise in hiring intent for blue-collar roles in 2025 *PHOTO: AI GENERATED*

Blue-collar wages grow 6% annually

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

Blue-collar wages in India are growing at an annual rate of 5–6 per cent, driven by strong demand for skilled talent across sectors such as manufacturing, automotive, e-commerce, and logistics, according to Deloitte's latest report 'Blue-Collar Workforce Trends 2025'.

The report notes a 10 per cent rise in hiring intent for blue-collar roles in 2025, reflecting increased industrial activity and the need for skilled labour. Performance-based incentives are also being widely used to attract and retain workers.

Wage growth is particularly strong in sectors like automotive, metals and mining, and chemicals—each recording steady salary increases of around 6 per cent, backed by investments in automation and capacity expansion. E-commerce leads the pack, with expected wage growth of 7 per cent, spurred by the rapid development of last-mile delivery, warehousing, and logistics infrastructure.

Neelesh Gupta, Partner at Deloitte India, said: "India's blue-collar workforce stands at the intersection of technological change and policy reform. Businesses must now build a future-ready workforce that is productive and empowered. Empowering this workforce isn't just good business—it is essential to industrial progress."

The report, based on insights from over 200 companies across 15 industries and data from 300+ manufacturing plants, highlights both progress and persistent gaps. Only 2.3 per cent of blue-collar roles pay over Rs 60,000 per month, typically reserved for highly skilled or experienced workers. Female employees, on average, earn just 70 per cent of male wages—an inequality most evident in physically demanding, non-ITI roles.

Wage standardisation, gender pay equity, and urgent upskilling remain key challenges, it concludes. *—PTI*

China slashes iPhone prices

BEIJING, 15 MAY

iPhone prices on major Chinese e-commerce platforms have dropped by up to one-third—around 2,500 yuan (US$346)—amid intense competition with domestic brands like Huawei and Xiaomi.

Although Apple has not officially cut prices, significant discounts are being offered through distributors. Local governments in nearly 30 cities and provinces, including Beijing and Shanghai, are also providing smartphone subsidies of up to 500 yuan for devices priced under 6,000 yuan, in a bid to boost consumer spending and revitalise the economy.

Previously ineligible for the subsidy, Apple's iPhone 16 Pro (128GB) is now listed at 5,999 yuan on JD.com and Tmall—down 2,000 yuan—making it eligible. The 16 Pro Max (256GB), originally priced at 9,999 yuan, is now available at 8,599 yuan.

While Apple's official website shows no price change, local media report the company has quietly notified distributors of per-unit discounts of up to US$176.

Apple has not responded to media queries.

These reductions have made some iPhones cheaper on the mainland than in Hong Kong, a long-standing hotspot for luxury electronics.

Despite the price cuts, Apple's shipments in China fell 9 per cent in Q1 2025 to 9.8 million units, according to IDC. In the tablet market, Apple's share dropped to 22.5 per cent, trailing Huawei (34.5 per cent) and Xiaomi, which gained ground at 16.8 per cent. *—Agencies*

GOLD PLUNGES ₹1,800 TO ₹95,050/10 G

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Gold prices tumbled by Rs 1,800 to Rs 95,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday, driven by a decline in global demand and weaker overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity fell to Rs 94,600 per 10 grams, including all taxes, from Rs 96,400 on Wednesday.

The sharp drop in prices follows easing global tensions, as investors shift away from safe-haven assets. "The recent US-China tariff reduction agreement has eased fears of a full-scale trade war, prompting investors to seek riskier assets," said Abans Financial Services CEO Chintan Mehta.

Silver prices also continued their downward trend, falling by Rs 1,000 to Rs 97,000 per kg, extending its losing streak for the fourth consecutive day.

Axis Securities noted that the decline was reinforced by stabilising geopolitical risks, including easing Indo-Pak tensions and growing optimism around potential US sanctions relief on Syria. Globally, spot gold fell by 0.53 per cent to USD 3,160.71 per ounce. Investors are now awaiting key events, including US macroeconomic data and Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech, which could influence the future direction of bullion prices. *—PTI*

Reliance Industries secures $2.9B loan

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

- The deal involved 55 banks, making it the largest syndicated loan group in Asia this year. Reliance holds credit ratings above India's sovereign grade

Reliance Industries, led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, has secured a dual-currency loan worth $2.9 billion, marking the largest offshore loan raised by an Indian company in over a year. The loan, signed on 9 May, 2025, is split into a $2.4 billion tranche in US dollars and a ¥67.7 billion ($462 million) tranche in Japanese yen.

The deal involved 55 banks, making it the largest syndicated loan group in Asia this year. Reliance holds credit ratings above India's sovereign grade, with Baa2 from Moody's and BBB from Fitch.

This loan pushes India's 2025 offshore borrowing to $10.4 billion, the fastest pace in a decade. While syndicated lending across Asia-Pacific has fallen, India has stood out.

The loan Reliance's continued investment push, with ambitious plans in deep technology, advanced manufacturing, and its 'New Energy' division, aiming to match its oil-to-chemicals business in scale within five to seven years. Reliance is also investing heavily in biogas, plastics, and polyester production.

Reliance's previous offshore loan, raising over $8 billion in 2023, also attracted around 55 banks. For FY2025, Reliance reported a record Rs 9.64 lakh crore in consolidated revenue, up 7.1%, with net profit steady at Rs 69,648 crore. *—Agencies*

MakeMyTrip slams EaseMyTrip for allegations of ties with China

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

MakeMyTrip on Thursday rejected allegations that it is predominantly owned by Chinese interests and refuted claims that the booking details of Indian armed forces personnel are exposed to hostile entities.

The accusations were made by EaseMyTrip founder Nishant Pitti, who posted on X screenshots purportedly showing booking patterns for the Indian armed forces, including Defence ID, travel routes and dates. Pitti warned that these details could potentially be accessed by adversaries, highlighting a serious security loophole that he urged to be addressed immediately.

Responding to the allegations, a MakeMyTrip spokesperson said the company does not wish to engage with "malicious or motivated accusations" and remains focused on delivering quality service to its customers as a responsible Indian corporation.

The spokesperson reiterated that MakeMyTrip is a proudly Indian company, founded by Indians, headquartered in India, and trusted by millions of travellers over the past 25 years.

Addressing the issue of ownership, the spokesperson clarified that MakeMyTrip is a publicly listed company on Nasdaq with a diverse shareholder base worldwide. *—PTI*

2,000 BluSmart EVs on the block as lenders plan recovery

Leasing companies are also considering re-leasing these vehicles rather than outright sales *PHOTO: X*

MUMBAI, 15 MAY

Nearly 2,000 electric vehicles (EVs) leased to BluSmart are reportedly being put up for sale by banks, NBFCs, investment platforms, and climate finance institutions in a bid to recover dues, according to The Economic Times.

The move follows BluSmart, the electric ride-hailing company, suspending operations last month following allegations of financial irregularities against the co-founders of its parent company, Gensol Engineering. Some lenders have already reclaimed their vehicles, while others are exploring leasing options with new partners.

Delhi-based EV taxi operator Evera, which currently has a fleet of 300 EVs, is in talks to lease an additional 800–1,000 vehicles. Uber-backed Everest Fleet and several smaller operators are also being approached.

Leasing companies are also considering re-leasing these vehicles rather than outright sales. However, multiple lessors have filed petitions in the Delhi High Court to prevent BluSmart or Gensol from transferring or creating third-party rights over the EVs. BluSmart's total fleet included around 8,000 EVs, of which nearly 5,000 were owned or leased by Gensol Engineering and further leased to BluSmart. *—PTI*

VI MOVES SC FOR ₹30K CR AGR DUES WAIVER

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear a fresh plea of Vodafone Idea (Vi) seeking waiver of around Rs 30,000 crore adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues.

A bench comprising Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih was urged by senior lawyer Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the telecom firm, that the plea needed an urgent hearing.

The telecom company has sought a waiver of around Rs 30,000 crore towards interest, penalty, and interest on penalty components of its AGR dues.

Rohatgi said the survival of the petitioner firm was crucial for maintaining competition in the telecom sector.

The bench is likely to hear the plea on 19 November. *—PTI*

SHARES AT YEAR'S PEAK

After a year of turbulences, Boeing flies nose-up

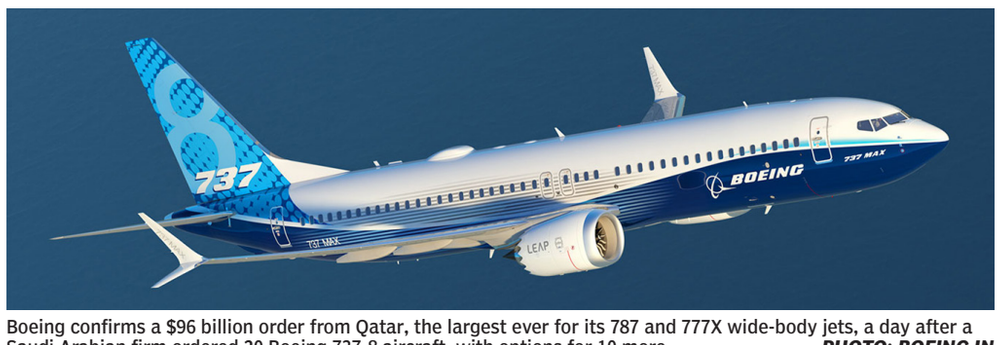
WASHINGTON, 15 MAY

Boeing appears to be turning a corner after years of setbacks, securing two major orders in the Middle East during President Donald Trump's recent regional visit.

The American aerospace giant confirmed a $96 billion order from Qatar, the largest ever for its 787 and 777X wide-body jets. This came just a day after a Saudi Arabian company placed an order for 20 Boeing 737-8 aircraft, with options for 10 more.

"That's pretty good," Trump remarked while announcing the Qatar deal. "Get those planes out there."

It's been a rare good week for Boeing. Multiple media outlets report that China has lifted its ban on airline deliveries of Boeing jets, following a US-China trade truce earlier this week.



Boeing confirms a $96 billion order from Qatar, the largest ever for its 787 and 777X wide-body jets, a day after a Saudi Arabian firm ordered 20 Boeing 737-8 aircraft, with options for 10 more *PHOTO: BOEING.IN*

However, controversy still surrounds the company and its connections. Trump drew sharp criticism from Democrats, ethics experts, and some Republicans after accepting a luxury Boeing 747-8 jet as a personal gift from Qatar's ruling family. Concerns were raised over national security, retrofitting costs, and potential violations of the US Constitution's emoluments clause, which prohibits foreign gifts to federal officials.

Boeing has faced a challenging few years. The company has lost over $35 billion since 2019, following the tragic crashes of two 737 Max jets that killed 346 people. Further damaging its reputation, a door panel blew off a 737 Max mid-flight in January, and a union strike last year brought production to a halt.

Despite these challenges, Boeing shares surged to their highest level in over a year on Wednesday, marking a fifth consecutive day of gains. Investors appear cautiously optimistic that the tide may be turning for the embattled aerospace firm. *—PTI*

Unnati Hooda and Malvika Bansod exit Thailand Open

BANGKOK, 15 MAY

Indian shuttlers Unnati Hooda and Malvika Bansod were ousted from the Thailand Open after suffering straight-game defeats to higher-ranked shuttlers in the second round of the Super 500 tournament here on Thursday. The 17-year-old Unnati, the 2022 Odisha Masters and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters winner, proved no match for world number two top seed Pornpawee Chochuwong from Thailand, going down 14-21, 11-21 in just 39 minutes. World number 23 Malvika, a runner-up at the 2024 Hylo Open, too, found the going tough against former world champion and Thai veteran Ratchanok Intanon. She went down 12-16-21 to the world number five shuttler in their second-round women's singles fixture of the USD 475,000 tournament.—*PTI*

Rory McIlroy is playing with new freedom

CHARLOTTE, 15 MAY

DeChambeau, whose bunker save for par on the final hole at Pinehurst No. 2 last summer gave him a one-shot victory over McIlroy, had the lead after two holes Sunday at the Masters until he faded to a 75 and tied for fifth. Rory McIlroy had a message for Bryson DeChambeau as to why there wasn't a lot of conversation between them in the final group at the Masters. Nothing personal, just business. A day after committing to the next two Australian Opens, Rory McIlroy says he's playing with "house money" after completing the career grand slam, and that freedom could produce something special. McIlroy, the world No.2, will start the PGA Championship at a soggy Quail Hollow no longer "burdened" by targets after his Masters success. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Maryna suspended in testosterone doping case

PARIS, 15 MAY

One of Ukraine's best-known athletes, Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk, a two-time silver medalist at the world track and field championships, has been provisionally suspended in a doping case involving testosterone. The Athletics Integrity Unit, which manages doping cases in track and field, issued an update on Thursday listing Bekh-Romanchuk as suspended since Wednesday over the suspected presence or use of testosterone.Bekh-Romanchuk's name wasn't on the entry list as of Thursday. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

National shooting selection trials 2 in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) on Thursday announced that the selection trials 2 and 3 for shotgun events (trap and skeet) will be conducted in New Delhi and Bhopal from 21 May to 1 June, respectively. The trials are held to help finalise the Indian team for a packed international calendar later in the year, including two ISSF World Cups (Italy and Greece), the 16th Asian Championships (Kazakhstan), the ISSF Junior World Cup (India-September), and the 3rd Asian Youth Games (Bahrain-October).The national selection trial 2 will be held at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting range here from 21-26 May, with skeet qualifications scheduled on day one.—*PTI*

Bologna end 51-year wait for glory with Italian Cup triumph

It was also coach Vincenzo Italiano's first win in a final

ROME, 15 MAY

Bologna ended a 51-year wait for a major trophy, winning the Coppa Italia on Thursday

PHOTO: X / @BOLOGNAFC1909EN

Bologna ended a 51-year wait for a major trophy when it beat AC Milan 1-0 to win the Italian Cup.

Dan Ndoye returned from injury to score the only goal and help Bologna to its first Italian Cup since 1974. The club, which is owned by Canadian Joey Saputo, has only won two second-division titles in between.

It was also coach Vincenzo Italiano's first win in a final, having lost back-to-back Europa Conference League title matches while in charge of Fiorentina and finishing runner-up in the 2023 Italian Cup.

"They were three hefty disappointments," Italiano told broadcaster Mediaset. "I didn't think I could immediately come back and get my own back. But we succeeded and I'm happy.

"I add an important trophy to my mantlepiece and I truly dedicate it to the guys, who were extraordinary."

Italiano had been flung in the air by his players in celebration immediately after the final whistle. Many of them were in tears of joy, much like some of the thousands of Bologna fans in the stands.

And the 47-year-old coach was eager to get back to the festivities.

"Now let me go and celebrate, because this is something incredible," Italiano said with a smile at the end of his television interview.

It is Italiano's first season at Bologna after replacing Thiago Motta, who left for Juventus after steering the team to its first-ever Champions League qualification. Motta was fired by Juventus earlier this season.

The result secured Bologna a spot in next season's Europa League and left Milan with the very real likelihood of missing out on European competition.

It could spell the end of Sérgio Conceição's short stint in charge of the Rossoneri, with Milan eighth in Serie A after a disappointing season. Both teams came to Rome looking to end an Italian Cup drought, as Milan last lifted the trophy 22 years ago, losing two finals in the intervening years. —*PTI*

ICC World Test champions to bag a $3.6 million purse

DUBAI, 15 MAY

The winners of the 2025 World Test Championship will be richer by USD 3.6 million, more than double of what was awarded in the previous edition.

Australia had received USD 1.6 million for winning the final against India in 2023. The 2025 final will be played between Australia and South Africa at Lord's from 11 June.

The losing finalists will earn USD 2.1 million, while the runners-up of the previous two editions got USD 800,000. "The increase in prize money exhibits the ICC's efforts to prioritise Test cricket as it looks to build on the momentum of the first three cycles of the nine-team competition," said the ICC in a statement on Thursday.

The WTC cycle saw South Africa finish on a high with 2-0 home series wins over Sri Lanka and Pakistan, ending with 69.44 percentage points. Defending champions Australia finished with 67.54 points while India finished with 50.00 after leading the table for the majority of the time.

"We are enormously proud to have the opportunity to defend the World Test Championship, especially at Lord's.

It's a testament to all those involved across the past two years who have worked incredibly hard to reach the final, which is a great honour for all of us," said Australian captain Pat Cummins.

South African skipper Temba Bavuma added: "Everyone understands the importance of Test cricket, and the World Test Championship lends context to this vital format of the game. —*PTI*

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Moeen Ali and Jos Buttler PHOTO: PTI

GT set to miss Buttler, Moeen not to return for KKR

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

England T20 stalwart Jos Buttler will leave for national duty after completing Gujarat Titans' last three league engagements as the IPL play-offs clash with his country's white ball series against the West Indies starting 29 May.

Titans are poised to finish among the top two teams post league stages with 16 points from 11 games, with three remaining games against Delhi Capitals (away, 18 May), Lucknow Super Giants (22 May), and Chennai Super Kings (May 25). As per the ESPNCricinfo report, Sri Lankan left-hander Kusal Mendis will replace Buttler during the play-off stages.

Among the other notable English players, Moeen Ali from Kolkata Knight Riders is also not coming back, along with Jofra Archer (Rajasthan Royals), Sam Curran, and Jamie Overton (both CSK).However, Liam Livingstone is rejoining RCB for the remainder of the tournament along with Aussie Tim David.

Moeen Ali is apparently nursing an "unspecified injury".Mustafizur-DC deal stuck due to the NOC issueAs reported by the PTI on Wednesday, Bangladesh left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman's participation in the IPL remains doubtful even though Delhi Capitals signed him as Jake Fraser McGurk's replacement.The left-arm pacer is yet to get a No Objection Certificate from Bangladesh Cricket Board and is currently in UAE to play five T20Is against UAE and Pakistan between 17 to 30 May.

The commitment to international cricket is sacrosanct and it will be interesting if BCB sanctions Mustafizur's absence from international cricket.

There is still some time, and DC is hopeful that with the help of the BCCI, a certain agreement could be reached. Marco Jansen to go back after the league stagesMeanwhile, South African seamer Marco Jansen will be rejoining the Punjab Kings squad. —*PTI*

Asian Individual Chess: Nihal Sarin finishes second

AL AIN, 15 MAY

Top-seeded Indian Grandmaster Nihal Sarin registered his fourth consecutive victory, defeating overnight leader Bardiya Daneshvar of Iran in the final round to finish second at the Asian Individual Open Chess Championship on Thursday.

Nihal matched Daneshvar on 7 points but the Iranian had better tiebreak to still win the title ahead of the Indian. After a rather sedate start, it was a brilliant finish by the Indian who not only won the silver medal but also booked his seat in the World chess cup to be held later this year in New Delhi.

More good news followed for the Indian fans as L R Srihari scored his final Grandmaster norm to become the 86th Grandmaster of the country. —*PTI*

REASON BEHIND RETIREMENT

Virat Kohli was given 'hint' about captaincy return: Report

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Virat Kohli's retirement from Test cricket has left Indian cricket with a vacuum that may not be filled for a long time. Already dealing with the retirements of Ravichandran Ashwin and Rohit Sharma, Indian Test cricket lost the services of another veteran when Kohli, through an Instagram post on 12 May, announced that he would no longer be continuing in the longest format.

That he was not keen on continuing in Tests was a buzz that was already quite loud in the days leading up to the announcement. But when it happened, most were taken aback as reports suggested that the BCCI and several other big names had tried to convince Kohli to continue playing with India's Tour of England starting in June.

Now, according to a report, Virat Kohli was given a hint that he may be made the Indian cricket team's Test captain again during India's Tour of Australia in December-January. In the video report by Sports Today, it is said that Kohli was hinted at a return to captaincy. This happened after India lost the second Test in Adelaide under Rohit Sharma's captaincy.

"At least people close to him do seem to suggest that he was given a sort of hint that he would be getting captaincy after Adelaide. But then things changed," the report said.

Then India lost the series, and the report mentioned that there was a 'change in tone' and the thought process of the team management was that it should look at a young captain. —*PTI*

BCCI reveals squads for India's tour of England

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

India Women recently dominated the ODI tri-series in Sri Lanka, and with an aim to continue that good performance, BCCI has announced strong squads for the white-ball tour of England. India will play five T20Is and three ODIs on the tour that will start on 28.

There are no major changes in the squads, with the likes of Shreyanka Patil and Renuka Singh continuing to miss out due to their respective injuries.

Both of the players who play for RCB in WPL were part of the squad for the tri-series due to injuries and are still recovering, with the ODI World Cup in sight later this year.As far as ODI squad is concerned, Kashavee Gautam has been dropped while Shafali Verma continues to get igored with Pratika Rawal performing consistently at the top of the order.

Sneh Rana has been named in both the squads after impressive performance on the Sri Lankan tour while Sree Charani, Shuchi Upadhyay, Kranti Goud, Amanjot Kaur have also retained their spots in the ODI team.

In the T20I team, Shafali Verma will partner Smriti Mandhana, while Richa Ghosh and Yastika Bhatia are the two wicketkeepers in both squads.

Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (WK), Yastika Bhatia (WK), Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Sneh Rana, Sree Charani, Shuchi Upadhyay, Amanjot Kaur, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Sayali Satghare —*PTI*

Italian Open: Resilient Paolini ends Stearns' run to reach Rome final

ROME, 15 MAY

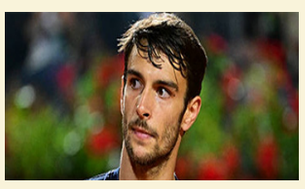
Italy's Jasmine Paolini was at her resilient best as she ended the run of American Peyton Stearns to reach the final of the Italian Open with a 7-5, 6-1 win on Thursday.

The runner-up at the French Open and Wimbledon last summer, Paolini trailed 4-1 in the first set but saved two set points – at 5-3 and 5-4 – to get herself back into the match. The errors began to flow from Stearns, and after taking the opening set, Paolini broke early in the second as she reached her first final in Rome, and her first singles final of 2025.

Musetti stuns Zverev, Paul reaches semis

In a thrilling showdown at Foro Italico, Lorenzo Musetti left the crowd in awe as he outplayed Alexander Zverev, clinching a 7-6, 6-4 victory to advance to the Rome Masters semifinals, keeping his title hopes alive.

Tommy Paul continued his impressive form at the Internazionali BNL d'Italia on Thursday, when he surged back into the last four in Rome. The 27-year-old tamed a big-hitting Hubert Hurkacz 7-6(4), 6-3 to reach consecutive semi-finals at the Italian ATP Masters 1000 event. Paul edged Hurkacz in a topsy-turvy opening set that featured six breaks before expertly powering to a one-hour, 58-minute victory. —*PTI*



Ligue 1: Saint-Etienne faces a must-win match

PARIS, 15 MAY

With Paris Saint-Germain already crowned champions and Marseille and Monaco assured of Champions League spots next season, attention turns to the race to avoid relegation on the final matchday in France's Ligue 1.

At the bottom of the standings, last-place Montpellier has been demoted. It remains to be seen which other club will be relegated to the second tier next season, with Saint-Etienne and Le Havre fighting for their survival.

A former French league powerhouse, Saint-Etienne dominated French soccer during the 1960s and '70s. Having just returned to the top-flight, the 10-time French champions have struggled throughout the season despite brilliant individual efforts from Zuriko Davitashvili and Lucas Stassin. Ahead of its final match against Toulouse at home on Saturday, Saint-Etienne is second-to-last in the standings, but just one point behind 16th-place Le Havre, which is in the relegation playoffs spot. Saint-Etienne needs to win, hoping that Le Havre either loses or draws at Strasbourg. —*PTI*

DL CAMPAIGN

Neeraj Chopra aims to regain javelin title

DOHA, 15 MAY

Celebrated Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will begin his Diamond League campaign here on Friday against a familiar but formidable field of rivals, eyeing a perfect start to the season in which he would be defending his world championship crown later this year.

At a venue where he will have sizeable crowd support thanks to expatriate Indians, Chopra will face two-time world champion and 2024 Olympics bronze-winner Anderson Peters of Grenada, Jakub Vadlejch of Czechia, who won here in 2024, the German duo of Julian Weber and Max Dehning, Kenya's Julius Yego and Roderick Genki Dean of Japan.

Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra PHOTO: PTI

Almost all of them have been Chopra's rivals at major competitions for a while now. A notable absentee is 2024 Paris Olympics gold-winner Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan.

We were never really close friends: Neeraj Chopra on Arshad Nadeem

Seeking to set the record straight, star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Thursday clarified that he and Arshad Nadeem were never really close friends and said "things won't be the same" after the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

In the aftermath of last month's Pahalgam terror attack, the decorated athlete and his family were bombarded with abuse on social media for inviting Nadeem to the now-postponed NC Classic in Bengaluru. —*PTI*